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**The focal point of the United States' war on drugs has shifted to countering Mexican drug trafficking organizations. To date its efforts and agreements with Mexico have largely concentrated on reducing drug supplies with little effect on reducing consumption. The Mérida Initiative continues this strategy, but it has added elements that indicate a desire to address larger issues relative to the problem of narco-trafficking. In pursuing an expanded roll in assisting Mexico, the U.S. must recognize the potential negative impacts on Mexican stability that militarization of the mission or a heavy-handed U.S. approach may have. This paper attempts to demonstrate that the U.S. can develop a comprehensive engagement strategy with Mexico that effectively reduces drug trafficking and violence in Mexico without delegitimizing the Mexican government in the eyes of its people. To do so will require the U.S. to address the issue of domestic drug demand and to establish a better means of managing all U.S. government efforts with Mexico.**

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# Beyond Mérida: A Cooperative Counternarcotics Strategy for the 21st Century

**by**

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**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

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## Abstract

***Beyond Mérida: A Cooperative Counternarcotics Strategy for the 21st Century***

The focal point of the United States' war on drugs has shifted to countering Mexican drug trafficking organizations. To date its efforts and agreements with Mexico have largely concentrated on reducing drug supplies with little effect on reducing consumption. The Mérida Initiative continues this strategy, but it has added elements that indicate a desire to address larger issues relative to the problem of narco-trafficking. In pursuing an expanded roll in assisting Mexico, the U.S. must recognize the potential negative impacts on Mexican stability that militarization of the mission or a heavy-handed U.S. approach may have. This paper attempts to demonstrate that the U.S. can develop a comprehensive engagement strategy with Mexico that effectively reduces drug trafficking and violence in Mexico without delegitimizing the Mexican government in the eyes of its people. To do so will require the U.S. to address the issue of domestic drug demand and to establish a better means of managing all U.S. government efforts with Mexico.

## INTRODUCTION

President Richard Nixon declared America's 'War on Drugs' in 1969. Since then, the United States (U.S.) has focused its international efforts on reducing the overall supply of illegal narcotics through financial support of foreign governments, eradication of drug sources, and interdiction of drugs during transshipment. The U.S. is a signatory to United Nations conventions as well as numerous bilateral treaties with drug producing and transshipment nations, all with the goal of reducing the worldwide illegal trade of narcotics and, by association, its related criminal activities. Despite tremendous expenditures of resources, these efforts have not achieved the dramatic reduction in drug trafficking that policymakers desired. However, U.S. interdiction operations in the Caribbean and Pacific over three decades elevated the risk to air and seaborne smugglers, who subsequently adapted their routes favoring the land bridge through Central America and Mexico.[1] The struggle to interdict illegal narcotics trafficking and prevent its accompanying violence has thus become the core issue of U.S.-Mexican relations over the past decade.

Since 1930 the United States and Mexico have signed no less than 46 bilateral treaties (plus numerous amendments) regarding narcotics trafficking; the vast majority of these agreements were reached between 1970 and 1989.[2] The most recent treaty, and arguably most extensive, is the 2008 accord widely known as the Mérida Initiative. Under this agreement the U.S. pledged a total of 1.6 billion dollars to the Government of Mexico and Central American countries to advance their counternarcotics efforts. Unfortunately this

[1] Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, 2011 INCSR: Country Reports - Honduras through Mexico (Washington, DC: 2011), http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2011/vol1/156361.htm, [01 Sep 2011].

[2] Department of State, Treaty Affairs Staff, Office of the Legal Adviser, Treaties in Force: A List of Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States in Force on January 1, 2011 (Washington, DC: 2011), 185-187.

initiative, like many others before, primarily emphasized law enforcement and the supply side of international drug trafficking, and it has yet to impact noticeably the drug trade from Mexico. The uncertainty of Mexican politics exacerbates U.S. difficulties in diminishing the illegal drug trade through Mexico. Attempts to bolster offensive counternarcotics efforts that expand the role of U.S. military forces along (or across) the Mexican border contain substantial risk to success politically beyond merely failing to curtail the drug trade. They will likely reinforce the historic mistrust among Mexicans of the U.S., and they could jeopardize popular support for a bold and proactive Mexican president willing to work with the U.S. Government. The U.S. must cooperate and collaborate with the Government of Mexico to develop a more effective, combined counternarcotics strategy that exploits alternative approaches and strengthens popular support for the Government of Mexico.

## OFFENSIVE SUPPLY-SIDE STRATEGIES

Some believe the U.S. should expand offensive counternarcotics operations to interdict traffickers and disrupt the drug trafficking organizations in Mexico. For over four decades the U.S. has dedicated the largest percentage of its counternarcotics resources and efforts towards supply reduction along three primary lines: source eradication, transshipment interdiction, and support to foreign government efforts.[3] Proponents for such methods believe that interruptions to illegal drug supplies will force suppliers to raise prices in an effort to recoup their losses, passing on the increased costs to consumers. As prices continue to rise, so the theory goes, narcotics users will eventually refuse to purchase the product when the price exceeds their personal spending threshold.

[3] Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, "Federal Drug Control Budget by Function, Fiscal years 1996-2010," http://www.albany.edu/sourcebook/pdf/t1142010.pdf, [9 September 2011].

Supply-side strategies for countering the drug trade retain many advantages. They are easily justified to the American constituency, which likes to know where and how Congress spends its tax dollars. Additionally, narco-trafficking is a criminal activity, and American culture presupposes that law enforcement organizations will actively identify, arrest, and prosecute offenders. To do otherwise would be un-American. Drug interdiction and crop eradication efforts also appeal to many because of their overtly active nature. They are visible proof that the government is performing its role to protect citizens from danger. Lastly, the results of such methods provide tangible metrics (quantities of drugs seized, numbers of arrests made, increases in drug prices) for law enforcement officials and politicians to demonstrate they are accomplishing their stated goals.

Based on these factors, many would argue that the U.S. should continue to pursue supply-side counternarcotics strategies to counter Mexican drug trafficking. In fact, some may go so far as to propose increasing unilateral interdiction efforts by expanding U.S. military operations along, or possibly across, the Mexican border. This would serve dual purposes: to reduce the flow of illegal narcotics, and to prevent the potential northerly spread of narcotics related violence into America. Proponents of robust interdiction efforts firmly believe that offensive actions intended to disrupt the drug cartels are the most expeditious and effective manner to reduce the illegal drug trade in Mexico. Reducing the drug trade could in turn help alleviate internal popular pressure on the Government of Mexico allowing it to focus more resources and efforts on revitalizing the nation.

## THE RISKS OF SUPPLY-SIDE STRATEGIES

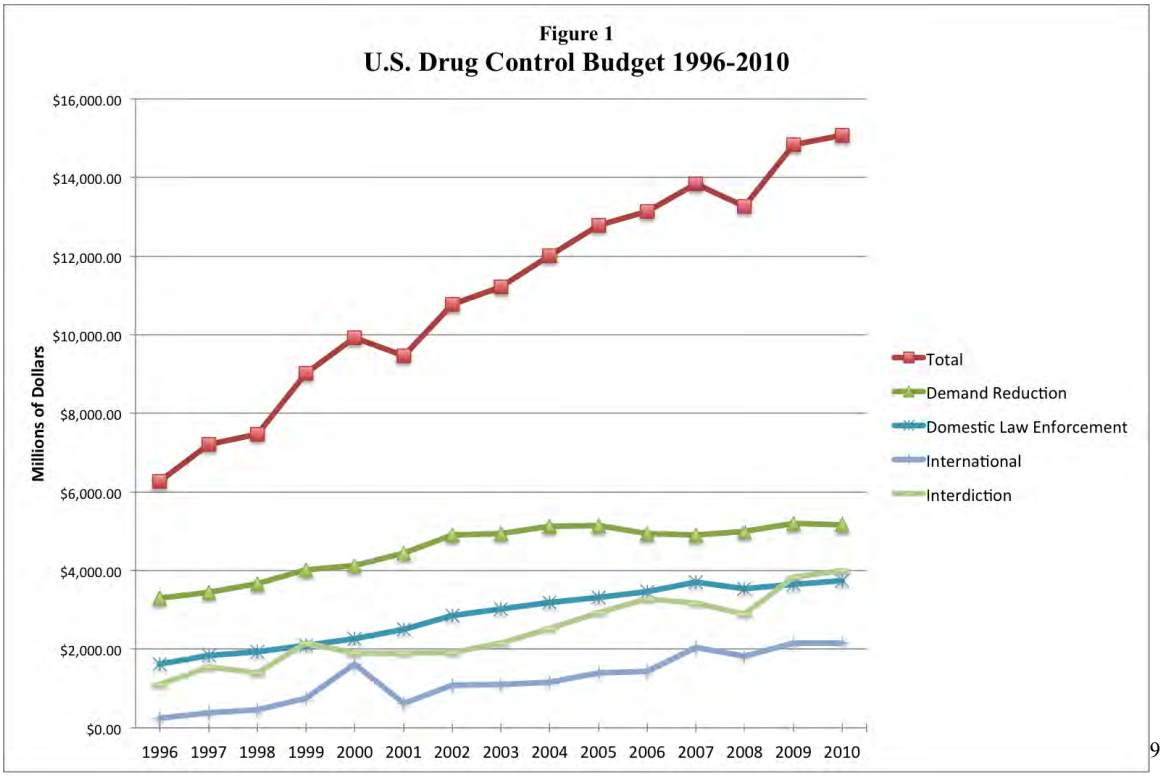
Unfortunately the disadvantages of supply-side counternarcotics strategies ultimately outweigh their advantages. These methods, to be effective, generally demand extraordinarily

large amounts of national resources, reducing a nation's ability to pursue other domestic programs such as infrastructure improvement and economic development. More specifically to Mexico, the extent of the narco-trafficking problem is so large that law enforcement agencies alone cannot sufficiently tackle the problem; the government has resorted to utilizing the Mexican military to fill capacity and capability gaps. The escalation of offensive supply-side counternarcotics efforts has also produced a concomitant escalation in violence.[4] The increased violence has become a destabilizing factor in Mexico. Lastly, and most significantly, counter-drug strategies focused on source and transshipment nations historically have failed to achieve their desired end state of reducing drug use in consumer countries.[5] A more detailed analysis of these issues clearly illustrates the significant drawbacks to a counter-drug strategy that focuses on the supply chain to the detriment of other underlying factors.

The U.S. has expended tremendous amounts of money, specifically in support of counternarcotics programs, primarily to combat the flow of drugs from South and Central America. The use of military forces in drug interdiction efforts has driven these costs even higher due to the inherent expense of military systems designed for high-end combat missions and the opportunity costs of utilizing military forces in non-military roles.[6] America's total drug control budget nearly quadrupled between 1996 and 2010; however, demand reduction efforts as a proportion of that budget decreased from 52.6 percent of the 1996 budget to less than 35 percent of the 2010 budget.[7] Supply control funding (the sum of

[4] Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, 2011 INCSR: Country Reports.
[5] Sidney Weintraub & Duncan Wood, Cooperative Mexican-U.S. Counternarcotics Efforts (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies Press, 2010), 98.
[6] Eric A. Reid, Reconsidering Military Support To Counterdrug Operations Along The U.S.-Mexico Border (Fort Leavenworth, KS: 2009), 70-71.
[7] Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, "Federal Drug Control Budget by Function, Fiscal years 1996-2010."

the remaining three components), conversely, increased from a low of 47 percent in 1996 to over 65 percent of the 2010 U.S. drug control budget, totaling nearly 10 billion dollars. This amount is projected to see a 50 percent increase in fiscal year 2012 surpassing 15 billion dollars, roughly one third as much as the entire Department of Homeland Security budget.[8] This dramatic increase is occurring as the defense budget shrinks and other significant aspects of the U.S. federal budget face significant cuts.



[9]

As the counternarcotics budget increased, the percent of that budget supporting foreign governments leveled off at roughly 14 percent of the drug control budget between 2007 and 2010. That amount is scheduled to plunge to nearly eight percent in 2012, despite the extraordinary efforts President Felipe Calderón is implementing to fight Mexican drug

[8] The White House, Office of Management and Budget, The Budget (Washington, DC: 2011), http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Overview [12 October 2011].

[9] Data obtained from [9] Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, "Federal Drug Control Budget by Function, Fiscal years 1996-2010."

cartels. Calderón became Mexico's president in 2006 after running on a platform that he would attack the drug trafficking organizations head on; he has made good on that promise. However, due to the magnitude of the problem and the vast corruption among Mexican police and judiciary, Calderón resorted to using the military to pursue drug traffickers. This produced unintended consequences, not the least of which was an exponential increase in violence over the past five years resulting in nearly 40,000 deaths.[10] Although the majority of these deaths have been isolated to specific regions within Mexico, they have deeply affected the populace. The president's approval rating has suffered accordingly, dropping from the high 60s to the mid 50s according to a 2011 Pew survey.[11] Although Calderón cannot be reelected in 2012 under Mexican law, loss of support could result in his party handing over the presidency to a party less cooperative with the U.S. and more willing to accede to the drug cartels. This would work completely contrary to U.S. aims in the region.

The most significant drawback to drug supply control strategies remains their historical lack of effectiveness. As previously noted, U.S. drug control budgets have grown consistently through the years. Illegal drug use in the U.S. has not fallen as a function of these efforts. For the period 2002 through 2008 illicit drug use among Americans 18 years old and older hovered around eight percent of the U.S. population; that figure climbed to almost nine percent in 2010.[12] In fact the drug use rate in America has climbed over the past two years in all age categories (Figure 2), despite a two billion dollar increase in drug supply control measures.

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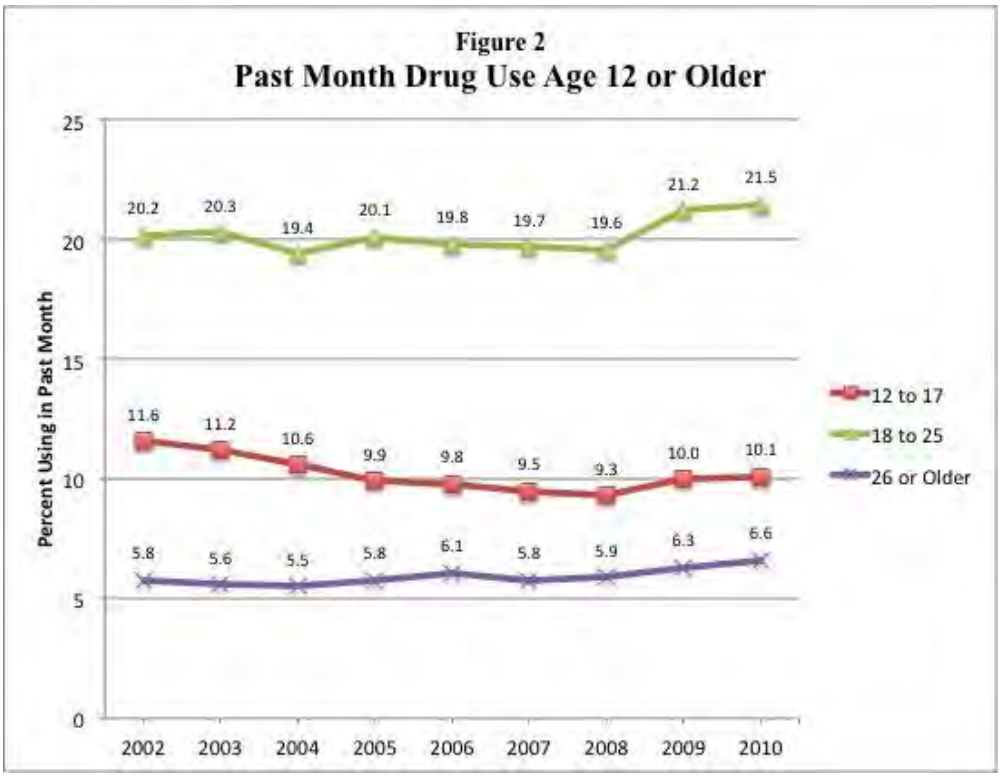
[10] T.W., "Security in Mexico: Raising the Stakes," The Economist online, 26 August 2011, http://www.economist.com/blogs/americasview/2011/08/security-mexico [11 September 2011].

[11] Pew Research Center, Crime and Drug Cartels Top Concerns in Mexico, 31 August 2011, http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2011/08/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Mexico-Report-FINAL-August-31-2011.pdf, [12 October 2011], 7.

[12] Department of Health and Human Services, Results from the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings (Washington, DC: 2010), http://oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k10NSDUH/2k10Results.pdf [11 September 2010], 13.



[13]

This is not to say that the increase in counternarcotics efforts has been entirely ineffective. To the contrary, the U.S. Department of State characterized 2010 as the Government of Mexico's "most successful year in terms of the arrests of high-profile drug traffickers in Mexico."[14] In one case, Mexico successfully neutralized the core of a particularly powerful trafficking organization, Los Zetas; unfortunately junior members eager to take charge quickly filled the void.[15] Mexican drug trafficking organizations consistently find ways to make up for their losses, and drug use in the U.S. remains constant or continues to rise. The solution must encompass more than bilateral measures to reduce or eliminate the supply and transshipment of drugs.

[13] Data obtained from Department of Health and Human Services, Results from the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 16.
[14] Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, 2011 INCSR: Country Reports.
[15] Juan P. Nava, "Mexico: Failing State or Emerging Democracy?", Military Review, 91, no. 2 (2011), 34.

## THE MÉRIDA INITIATIVE

The Mérida Initiative of 2008 marked a significant escalation in U.S. support for Mexican counternarcotics efforts. This agreement pledged over one billion dollars in U.S. assistance to Mexico between 2008 and 2010 primarily in the form of equipment and personnel training.

> According to the State Department, the four primary goals of the Mérida Initiative are to: 1) break the power and impunity of criminal organizations; 2) assist the Mexican and Central American governments in strengthening border, air, and maritime controls; 3) improve the capacity of justice systems in the region; and, 4) curtail gang activity in Mexico and Central America and diminish the demand for drugs in the region.[16]

By design the support focused principally on enabling the Government of Mexico to reduce the supply and transshipment of drugs between Mexico and the U.S., once again a supply-side strategy. However, the Mérida Initiative has marked a subtle but significant change in the overall international relations strategy with Mexico regarding drug trafficking efforts. The plan's goals expanded cooperative efforts beyond the customary law enforcement aspect of counternarcotics interdiction and included recognition of other contributing factors.

The most noteworthy and encouraging aspects of the agreement were the inclusion of judicial reforms in Mexico and drug demand reduction as primary goals. A revision to extend support for the Mérida Initiative beyond 2010 absorbed Mérida's goals into the four pillars of U.S.-Mexican cooperation: 1) Disrupt organized criminal groups, 2) Institutionalize reforms to sustain rule of law and respect for human rights, 3) Create a 21st century border, and 4) Build strong and resilient communities.[17] The pillars of the revised agreement demonstrate the understanding that future relations with Mexico must address larger issues

[16] Clare Ribando Seelke, The Merida Initiative for Mexico and Central America: Funding and Policy Issues, (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 2.

[17] Government Accounting Office, MÉRIDA INITIATIVE: The United States has Provided Counternarcotics and Anticrime Support but Needs Better Performance Measures, (Washington, DC: 2010), 6.

beyond merely drug interdiction in order to successfully ensure stability. And yet, the bulk of the U.S. funding appropriated to date has still been for military hardware and training in support of Mexican offensive operations calling into question Mérida's overall effectiveness.

Mérida and its 2010 revision fall short of a far-reaching solution to the Mexican narco-trafficking problem in other respects as well. As with all international agreements made by the White House, these initiatives require funding, which only comes through the approval of the U.S. Congress. To date, wide support for Mérida has helped maintain funding levels for its various elements. Congress has, however, divided the appropriations between a variety of accounts: International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE), Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and the Economic Support Fund (ESF).[18] This effectively capped portions of the program and reduced flexibility by limiting the amounts apportioned to each account. It also divided the responsibility for managing the program among various offices with the State Department making it difficult to ensure unity of effort. Adding to this, a 2010 Government Accounting Office report concluded that the Mérida Initiative failed to "include outcome performance measures that indicate progress toward achieving strategic goals," and it had "not developed a comprehensive set of timelines for all expected deliveries."[19] Without performance measures and delivery timelines, program managers in the State Department have little hope of evaluating the effectiveness of the aid and support they are delivering. The combination of these factors has reduced the overall value of Mérida as the foundation of U.S. relations with Mexico with respect to the war on drugs.

[18] Seelke, The Merida Initiative for Mexico and Central America, 3.
[19] Government Accounting Office, MÉRIDA INITIATIVE, Executive Summary.

## THE MILITARIZATION OF COUNTERNARCOTICS

A major effect of U.S.-Mexican narco-trafficking treaties, including the Mérida Initiative, and U.S. drug control strategies overall has been the steadily increasing use of military forces to perform a law enforcement mission. This militarization began gradually, and it progressed to President Calderón deploying the Mexican Army in 2006 to directly engage drug trafficking organizations. The 1982 U.S. Defense Authorization Act, under President Ronald Reagan, allowed for "military cooperation with civilian law enforcement" opening the door for U.S. military personnel under federal control to engage in training, equipment operations, and detection and monitoring missions.[20] This not only elevated the use of military forces in counternarcotics rolls utilizing ships and aircraft in international waters and airspace, it also paved the way for military ground forces to assist law enforcement officials along the U.S.-Mexican border. U.S. border states, i.e. Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and California, were also allowed to request federal funding under Title 32 authority for the purpose of employing state National Guard forces in counternarcotics missions.[21] The net effect has been an incorporation of counternarcotics as a military role.

During this same period, The U.S. and Mexico also gradually increased intelligence sharing and operational cooperation. This has manifested itself in combined U.S.-Mexican counternarcotics 'fusion' centers, which support the sharing of information and intelligence.[22] In the spring of 2011, the U.S. acknowledged conducting intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) missions over Mexican territory using Predator and

[20] Celio Broggini, ed., U.S. Army on the Mexican Border: A Historical Perspective, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2010), 74.
[21] Broggini, U.S. Army on the Mexican Border, 6-7.
[22] Ginger Thompson and Mark Mazzetti, "U.S. Drones Fight Mexican Drug Trade," New York Times, 16 March 2011, sec. A, p. 1.

Global Hawk high-altitude unmanned aerial systems (UAS).[23] Although these UAS are currently unarmed, the Predator system has proven its utility and effectiveness in locating and terminating international terrorists in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen. Their use to augment Mexican forces could become an attractive option to execute combined counternarcotics operations in the future.

The most overt use of military forces to combat Mexican drug traffic organizations appeared under President Calderón. Facing a problem of enormous magnitude and possessing insufficient and unreliable law enforcement resources to address it, Calderón chose to utilize one of the remaining respected institutions in Mexico: the military. In 2006 he deployed nearly 36,000 military forces to fulfill a variety of offensive counternarcotics missions including source eradication, raids, seizures, intelligence gathering and interrogations.[24] In response to these operations, drug trafficking organizations have elevated the violence in Mexico to alarmingly high levels. Annual killings increased more than five times from 2007 through 2010.[25] Calderon's efforts have achieved many successes, but at an enormous cost.

The long-term effects of the militarization of counternarcotics operations are noteworthy, especially in the case of U.S and Mexico. U.S. military operations, or even U.S. led law enforcement operations, in Mexican territory risk political backlash from both the Mexican and American publics. The history of U.S. Army border operations (sometimes cross-border) is extensive. It dates back to the annexation of Texas, through the Mexican American War and World War I, and up to and including the war on drugs.[26] This history is

[23] Thompson and Mazzetti, "U.S. Drones Fight Mexican Drug Trade, sec. A, p. 1.
[24] Stephanie Hanson, "Mexico's Drug War," Council on Foreign Relations, 20 November 2008, http://www.cfr.org/mexico/mexicos-drug-war/p13689 [11 September 2011].
[25] "Drugs in Mexico: A Gruesome Paradox," The Economist online, 2 February 2011, http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/02/drugs_mexico [1 September 2011].
[26] Broggini, U.S. Army on the Mexican Border, 81-82.

well remembered by Mexicans and has served as an enduring source of tension between the two nations. U.S. military operations in sovereign Mexican territory beyond humanitarian disaster relief are likely to reinforce that distrust of 'American Imperialism.' As one analyst from the Center for Strategic and International Studies stated, "[Increasing the Pentagon's role] only would perpetuate the dysfunctional relationship between the two countries."[27] Of course, the U.S. government must contend with its own domestic political situation if it fails to respond sufficiently to what the public perceives as a growing threat. It must strike a balance that achieves U.S. goals without forfeiting public sentiment in Mexico.

The Government of Mexico faces more serious domestic threats tied to the militarization of its counternarcotics operations: loss of support and increased instability. Many in Mexico initially supported Calderón's stance regarding the need to attack and disrupt the drug trafficking organizations. However, despite Mexico's economy improving, drug related violence has taken center stage causing the president's approval rating, and the government's, to slip below their previously consistent high levels. The Government of Mexico desperately needs public support in order to continue such a costly counternarcotics strategy. Perhaps more importantly, militarization of the drug war in Mexico has opened up the army to a host of issues that will contribute to growing instability. First, military counternarcotics operations have resulted in accusations of human rights violations against army personnel; human rights issues have delayed U.S. funding for Mexico in the past. Second, these operations and their associated rising violence have likely contributed to a noticeable decline in the public's view of the military as a good influence in Mexico from 77

[27] Marisa Taylor and Nancy A. Youssef, U.S. military outreach to Mexico likely to upset . . . Mexicans, 15 March 2009, http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2009/03/15/64001/us-military-outreach-to-mexico.html [11 September 2011].

percent in 2009 to 62 percent in 2011.[28] Lastly, the military's increased role has placed its personnel in direct contact with the same criminal element that already has pervaded much of local law enforcement, local government and the judiciary.[29] The military cannot remain immune to corruption indefinitely. Waning public support and potential corruption could ultimately undermine the military's ability to provide vital support to the government and to ensure the future stability of Mexico at a time when it is most needed.

## COOPERATIVE MEANS TO A POSITIVE END

The bleak picture painted by many for Mexico's future is only one of many possible outcomes. Mexico has many positive factors working in its favor: democratic institutions, a growing economy and a desire for stability and prosperity.[30] The U.S. recognizes that it has an equal or larger share in the drug problem and violence in Mexico, and therefore must take positive action to implement a solution. Most importantly the U.S. has witnessed firsthand in Pakistan the negative ramifications that unilateral action in sovereign nations has on the opinion of a foreign populace. By taking the sum of these dynamics into account, the U.S. can develop a holistic strategy that focuses on supporting Mexico across multiple lines of operation while addressing U.S drug demand issues as a source of the larger narcotics and violence problems.

Fortunately, the vast majority of the Mexican people believe in the power of their democracy. They are deeply interested in arresting the destructive forces of drug trafficking to their society, and they support employing military forces for this purpose.[31] They favor U.S. aid and training for Mexican counternarcotics forces, but the vast majority opposes

[28] Pew, Crime and Drug Cartels Top Concerns in Mexico, 7.
[29] Hanson, "Mexico's Drug War."
[30] Nava, "Mexico: Failing State or Emerging Democracy?", 36.
[31] Pew, Crime and Drug Cartels Top Concerns in Mexico, 1.

employing U.S. forces in Mexico.[32] The U.S. must keep these opinions in mind as governing factors when formulating its foreign policy with Mexico regarding drug trafficking. Any offensive policy that advocates expanding the role of U.S. military forces (or U.S. law enforcement) in Mexican territory stands to turn public opinion against the U.S. If the Mexican government sponsors or tolerates such actions, it too risks losing popular support. This suggests that all counternarcotics operations within Mexico must remain under the control of Mexican authorities and must be conducted by Mexican forces. The U.S. could continue to expand its support in the form of greater intelligence sharing and training without appearing to be manipulating the Mexican government. Furthermore, to arrest any further erosion of support for the military, Mexican law enforcement must be the primary agent for counternarcotics missions rather than the military.

The U.S., having recognized both its culpability in the overall drug economy and its responsibility to implement solutions, must continue to support Mexico's internal efforts. Future counternarcotics agreements with Mexico should strengthen the financial support provided under the Mérida Initiative and the support for government reforms to end corruption. However, this cannot be conducted in isolation: U.S. aid and support must be coordinated and synchronized to assist Mexico in addressing the host of internal issues that weaken the central government's ability to maintain the rule of law. This means helping Mexico address challenges in education and infrastructure as well as corruption and drug-related crime organizations. Opponents of these ideas may point to the enormous expense the U.S. has incurred in recent attempts at 'nation building' in Iraq and Afghanistan, but Mexico should be viewed in a much different light. Mexico is not a case of nation building,

[32] Pew, Crime and Drug Cartels Top Concerns in Mexico, 1.

but rather of nation renovating. It has a foundation and structure on which to improve. More importantly, the fate of Mexico is more directly tied to U.S. national interests by virtue of its proximity, the amount of trade the nations share, and their expansive border. This is not a task of convenience or noble aspiration; it is a task of necessity.

The challenge for the U.S. will be balancing its support of Mexico with a domestic program that seeks to address the major issue at the heart of narcotics trafficking: U.S. drug demand. As history has shown, attempts to solve drug trafficking through a supply-side strategy do not succeed. A comprehensive domestic program of drug use prevention, treatment and rehabilitation must augment efforts to interdict narcotics trafficking. Hawaii's Opportunity Probation with Enforcement Program (HOPE), which focuses on reducing drug use within the criminal population, serves as a successful example of program along this line. A recent study of nearly 500 people in HOPE demonstrated its ability to reduce drug use and crime. Participants in HOPE for one year were "55 percent less likely to be arrested for a new crime, 72 percent less likely to use drugs, 61 percent less likely to skip appointments with their supervisory officer and 53 percent less likely to have their probation revoked."[33] According to one analyst, implementation of a similar program nationwide could ultimately reduce U.S. illegal drug demand sufficiently to cut 40 percent of Mexican drug cartel income.[34] This would function as an enormously positive first step toward reducing the drug trade, and it would demonstrate to Mexico that the U.S. is serious about effecting significant changes to the root issues within the international drug trade.

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[33] The Pew Center on the States, "The Impact of Hawaii's HOPE Program on Drug Use, Crime and Recidivism," (January 2010), http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/uploadedFiles/PSPP_HOPE_Brief_web.pdf [12 October 2011], 1.

[34] Mark Kleiman, "Surgical Strikes in the Drug Wars: Smarter Policies for both Sides of the Border," Foreign Affairs 90, no. 5 (2011), http://search.proquest.com/docview/885100345?accountid=322 [23 September 2011].

A cohesive counternarcotics effort for the U.S. in conjunction with Mexico will require more than just balancing the weight of effort between supply and demand control measures. In order to be truly effective, it will require a synchronization of all U.S. efforts with respect to Mexico, not only the drug war. Currently Mexican affairs fall within the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) headed by an Assistant Secretary of State. But Mexico is only one of over 30 nations in this bureau. In order to manage an effort of this magnitude, the U.S. should establish a separate entity within Department of State to coordinate and synchronize a whole of government approach toward Mexico.

This 'Bureau of Mexican Affairs,' led by its own Assistant Secretary, could incorporate State Department expertise from offices such as International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), and it could work with interagency partners such as Department of Trade, Department of Justice, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy. It would also require authorization to coordinate directly with U.S. state and city governments along the border with Mexico, which also coordinate law enforcement activities with Mexican authorities. By centralizing the planning for all U.S. efforts toward Mexico, a long-term strategy could be successfully managed and executed to achieve the dual goals of reducing narco-trafficking and improving stability in Mexico.

## CONCLUSION

There is no single U.S. solution to the Mexican drug trafficking problem. Narco-trafficking is closely intertwined with a host of other issues facing the Government of Mexico, therefore U.S. policy makers must not implement solutions narrowly focused on this singular element. Previous agreements with Mexico have focused on reducing the supply of

illegal narcotics similar to U.S. policies with Columbia. Unfortunately the enormous efforts expended have failed to yield substantial reductions in U.S. drug use over the past decade. Demand continues to drive traffickers to deliver the drugs. The Mérida Initiative has provided an initial attempt at a more holistic approach to the issue especially with respect to corruption in Mexico. However, it is still heavily biased toward supply control and has contributed to Mexico's increased militarization of the counternarcotics mission. Should the U.S. continue increasing its law enforcement presence in Mexico and its own use of military forces in counternarcotics, it risks jeopardizing the support of the Mexican people for their own government.

The U.S. must vigorously support Mexico's counternarcotics efforts as part of a larger 'whole of government' initiative, while simultaneously implementing a sustained domestic demand control program. It should make every effort to minimize the use of U.S. military forces for counternarcotics missions, especially in Mexico. Furthermore, it needs to establish a single entity with overall authority to develop and to implement U.S. strategy for assisting Mexico across multiple lines of operation. Unity of effort across all U.S. organizations engaged in disrupting drug trafficking organizations and enabling Mexican stability is essential to achieving success.

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